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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8319th meeting
Thursday, 26 July 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Michon
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2018/723)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2018/723)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Colombia to participate in today's meeting.

On behalf of the Security Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Óscar Adolfo Naranjo Trujillo, Vice-President of Colombia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/723, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Arnault.

Mr. Arnault: I appreciate this opportunity to present to members of the Security Council the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/723) on the peace process in Colombia covering the past four months, which coincide with the conclusion of the mandate of President Juan Manuel Santos.

It is an honour to share once again the floor with Vice-President Oscar Naranjo Trujillo, who, throughout this period, along with High Commissioner for Peace Rodrigo Rivera and other members of the Government, has been at the forefront of efforts to press forward with the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, and to provide as firm a foundation as possible upon which the next Government can build.

The Vice-President and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia have developed a good working method, establishing common quarterly priorities with regard to issues under United Nations verification, and applying our respective resources and leverage to meet those goals. Progress may have been partial and delays have occurred, but we have been more successful in pushing implementation working together than we would have been working separately.

We are ready to adopt the same collaborative approach with the incoming administration of President-elect Iván Duque Márquez. As an example of our common work during the past quarter, we have put special emphasis on applying a gender approach more forcefully in the reintegration of former combatants and in the security guarantees for communities, with some positive results, which are reflected in the Secretary-General's report.

Since the report of the Secretary-General was issued, on 20 July, Colombia's Independence Day, the new Congress was inaugurated. It includes representatives of the political party the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC), and its procedures are aligned with the Law on the Status of the Opposition — a key part of the peace-related legislation adopted earlier this year that provides for a more level playing field between the majority and the opposition in all elected assemblies. The Law guarantees, among other provisions, the presence of the opposition in the governing bodies of both Chambers. The presence of the political party FARC fulfils one of the core objectives of the Final Peace Agreement, and this Congress is among the more diverse, plural and representative in the country's legislative history. Within our mandate, we are ready and willing to cooperate with all its members.

That is not the only achievement of the past month. Special recognition must be given to the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. The Peace Agreement recognized the deep aspiration of Colombian society to truth and justice, along with the termination of the conflict. Unfortunately, the long delays involved in the establishment of the Jurisdiction and the adoption of its normative framework created, within public opinion, a lingering sense that truth and justice were somehow overshadowed by the political process.

The first hearings held by the Peace Jurisdiction on 10 and 13 July involving a former army general and the former general commander of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) were therefore extremely important to start dispelling the perception of impunity. The pursuit of accountability through the Jurisdiction and the Commission on Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition will continue to be critical to the legitimacy of the peace process.

Time will tell, but the positive response from victims and the recent decision of senior army officers to voluntarily accept the jurisdiction of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace are an indication that the Colombian peace process may well be close to striking the right balance between the demands of peace and justice — a balance that, as those present know, has been elusive, more often than not, in the negotiated settlement of armed conflicts. The international community should therefore maintain its support for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission and the Special Unit for the Search for Persons.

I would also like to bring into relief the national pact of repudiation of violence against social leaders, which was signed by President Santos and President-elect Duque, among others. It is the first time that violence against social leaders is received with such a strong sense of outrage, expressed in the streets of Colombia and cities abroad, in the halls of national institutions and across the political spectrum. In the polarized context of a protracted electoral campaign and in a society at times indifferent to developments in the zones of conflict, that national consensus against attacks on social leaders is significant.

As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, the most important measures provided in the Peace Agreement for improving the security of communities have begun to be implemented, even if their impact to date is clearly insufficient. We hope that this consensus and sense of urgency on the part of Colombian society will give momentum to the implementation of those measures and will galvanize the efforts of the justice system to prosecute those responsible for these attacks.

Supporting institutions in their efforts to curb violence in the territories will remain a top priority for the Mission. We very much hope that a similar consensus can be forged around the central challenge for consolidating peace — that is, to address the combination of poverty, violence and illegal economies to which inhabitants of the zone of conflict continue to be subjected. A tightly coordinated and well-resourced effort by State institutions, in cooperation with the affected communities and their organizations, will be required to bring the rule of law, security and legal productive opportunities to areas that have long been prey to violence and State neglect. I would therefore like to echo the Secretary-General's report and call for dialogue and cooperation among the new national Government, local authorities, social organizations and civil society in the territories. We believe that such dialogue and cooperation are a prerequisite for success.

While the participation of FARC representatives in the Congress is a major step, the reintegration into civilian life of former FARC-EP members is unfinished business. The Secretary-General has underlined in past reports the difficult environment in which that reintegration is taking place. Completing the work started by the current Government will no doubt require dedication and resources, but fulfilling the guarantees given to those who have laid down their weapons and now undergo the difficult transition to civilian life is essential for Colombia. It is also essential for Colombia to be a source of motivation for parties to conflicts elsewhere in the world.

In concluding, let me express the Mission's appreciation to the Government of President Santos, the leadership of FARC, Colombia's institutions and civil society, who have welcomed us and cooperated generously with our work during the past two years. As the new authorities take office, they can count on the support of this Mission as they take on the hard work of consolidating peace and achieving reconciliation.

The President: I thank Mr. Arnault for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council wishing to make statements.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): Let me begin by welcoming His Excellency Vice-President Óscar Naranjo Trujillo back to the Council, and allow me also to thank him warmly for the personal leadership he has shown in implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and in working very closely with the United Nations and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. I would also like to thank Special Representative Arnault for his briefing today and for all the excellent work he and his team have carried out in recent months.

The United Kingdom welcomes the congressional and presidential elections held between March and June, which were the least violence and most inclusive in Colombia for decades. On behalf of the British Government, I would like to congratulate President-elect Iván Duque Márquez on his electoral victory and also Vice-President-elect Marta Ramirez — the first woman to take up that office in Colombia. For the first time in a generation, elections were not dominated by the conflict but defined by campaigns about issues affecting ordinary people.

We also warmly welcome another remarkable milestone brought about by the peace process. For the first time, the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) participated in elections and, last Friday, joined the new Congress.

The speed of the transition continues to surprise and inspire all who follow this journey, but as with all such transitions the challenges remain considerable, and as the special representative has just said, the 2018 elections mark the beginning of a new phase of consolidating the peace process and broadening its ownership to all constituencies. Dialogue and cooperation will continue to be an essential part of that work and FARC's presence in Congress will enable its voice to join others in building a consensus about the future.

We commend the statement of President Santos on Friday welcoming the FARC to the Congress and lauding its commitment to working within Colombia's Constitution and democracy. We welcome President-elect Duque's rejection of polarization and his commitment to working for unity.

We recognize the enormity of the achievements in the implementation of the peace agreement to date, but as set out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/723), we also recognize the significant work that remains. Although the elections were the most peaceful in recent history, a significant achievement, we are concerned by the security situation in some post-conflict areas, particularly due to the proliferation of illegal armed groups. Violence between these groups has brought new fighting to some areas and displacements, especially in the Pacific coast region. That has claimed the lives of an increasing number of human rights defenders and social activists, who in many cases are targeted because they champion the rights of local communities.

I welcome the steps taken by the Government to reduce that violence, including the recent commitment by both President Santos and President-elect Duque to new special protective measures for social leaders in rural areas. We hope that the measures will help to address that challenge and we welcome the recruitment of more women officers in the National Protection Unit as a positive step.

As the Special Representative mentioned, on social economic reintegration of FARC members, we agree with the priorities that he has set out for the coming months and we hope that the parties will seize the opportunity to inject renewed momentum into improving security and accelerating the reintegration of former combatants, socioeconomic development and crop substitution programmes. I also note that negotiations with the National Liberation Army continue in Cuba. We will welcome any developments that lead to an end to violence.

Let me conclude by paying tribute once more to President Santos, who took the bold step of coming to the Security Council to ask for our support in 2016. His Government started an extraordinary journey that belongs to all Colombians, and the United Kingdom remains committed to supporting them all the way to the end. The Council has been incredibly proud to support Colombia's peace agreement over the past two and half years. In a world where conflicts destroy so many lives and cause untold suffering, Colombia's peace process offers inspiration and hope to us all. We look forward to continuing to work with President-elect Duque and his Government on continued implementation over the months and years ahead to consolidate gains already made for the Colombian people and to continue to inspire peacemakers around the world.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to welcome Vice-President Óscar Naranjo Trujillo to the Council. He has been key in this process, and through him I would like to congratulate President Juan Manuel Santos and his entire Government on their commitment to the peace process in Colombia. We also congratulate Ambassador María Emma Mejía Vélez, who has also made decisive contributions to the process. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his briefing. We reiterate our support for the important tasks he and his team carry out.

On 20 July, Colombia celebrated 208 years as a Republic. It was an opportune moment to acknowledge the country's recent developments, crowned by the most peaceful and inclusive electoral process in decades. We wish to highlight the legacy of peace of the outgoing Administration and the democratic aspiration of the Colombian people. We would like to focus on three aspects of the endeavour that we consider critical and are obviously interconnected — security, reintegration and reconciliation.

Security requires a redoubling of efforts to combat organized crime. We are concerned about its spread due to the limited State presence in remote rural areas previously controlled by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). Peru knows well the challenge that drug trafficking poses to security, State institutions and democratic governance, just as it understands the effectiveness of combating the scourge by addressing its root causes with the help of the concerned civilian population. We can thereby promote alternative, comprehensive and sustainable development.

We believe that such development is also important to the process of reintegration, which requires the weaving of a new social fabric. In that process, we must take into account the social and economic dynamics of each region, along with its opportunity. It is also important to promote the participation of the private sector and international cooperation.

Upholding the rule of law is critical to promoting the trust and legitimacy that all society-building requires. In that connection, we welcome the launching of the hearings of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace — a commitment not only to all of the victims, but to all Colombians. In that regard, we welcome the important Pact of repudiation of violence against social leaders, signed by all Colombian political parties, as well as the massive mobilization of Colombian citizens against such violence. The assassination of leaders, activists and ex-combatants must cease and be subject to the investigations and criminal prosecution that the Colombian institutions have the power to carry out. That is also important in order to promote reconciliation. On that point, we note the importance of the participation of women and youth, and welcome the increasingly active role of the working group on gender of the National Reintegration Council.

The visit of youth leaders to an ecotourism project of ex-combatants in Miravalle, organized by the Mission, is a good practice that we encourage to be replicated in other locations in Colombia and other conflict situations worldwide, in line with resolution 2419 (2018) on youth, peace and security, adopted by the Council in June.

The benefits of peace are numerous and concrete. Recently, in the Lindosa mountain range in the department of Guaviare, on land previously affected by the conflict, a group of investigators discovered what is considered to be one of the most important samples of cave art in the world, resulting in the establishment of eight protected zones. Like that finding, the peace process seeks to rediscover and showcase a rich past in order to build a more prosperous future. It is a task that faces the natural challenges of a project that is as complex as it is ambitious. Colombia has launched an exemplary national project of maintaining peace and sustaining development.

I conclude by reaffirming Peru's commitment to and support for the Colombian peace process and the Mission deployed by the Council's mandate, at the request of the parties. We have followed the large and complex peace process since its inception and are now a guarantor of the peace agreement and its commitment to all Colombians.

We are convinced that the Security Council will continue to work constructively with the new authorities in the interest of peace and security in Colombia.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. I welcome Vice-President Óscar Naranjo Trujillo to the Council and thank Special Representative Arnault for his briefing.

The peace process in Colombia is a fine example of the Council's successful response over recent years to regional hotspot issues through collaborative efforts. It is of crucial importance not only to the achievement of comprehensive peace and development in the country, but also to the maintenance of stability in the region as a whole. China commends the efforts of President Santos, the Colombian Government and all parties concerned in this regard.

In recent months, positive progress has been made in the Colombian peace process, and the presidential elections were held without incident. The Government

and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) have agreed on a strategy for the reintegration of former combatants. Encouraging progress has also been achieved with regard to the ceasefire between the Government and the National Liberation Army. Healing the wounds of war, however, will not be an easy task. The comprehensive implementation of the Peace Agreement requires efforts at the political, security and development levels as well as in the area of social cohesion. As such, it is a long-term project that requires a systematic approach and the sustained efforts of all parties in Colombia as well as members of the international community.

The peace process is irreversible: such is the consensus of the entire Colombian population and the international community. China hopes that all relevant actors in Colombia will remain firmly committed to the peace process, continue to actively implement the Peace Agreement and resolve any issues, as they arise, through dialogue and consultation. The Security Council and the international community should remain seized of the situation and give continued support to the pursuit of peace in Colombia, respect the ownership of the Government and the people of Colombia of the peace process, and provide constructive assistance to facilitate their efforts.

China commends Special Representative Arnault and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for their important roles in promoting the peace process. We hope that the Mission will continue to enhance its communication with both the Government and FARC, build mutual confidence and work with both sides for the active implementation of the Peace Agreement.

In closing, let me say that China stands ready to work together with other members of the Council to make its contribution to continued progress in the Colombian peace process and the early achievement of comprehensive peace and stability in the country.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank the Swedish presidency for having convened this important meeting on the consideration of the quarterly report on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2018/723). We also congratulate Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, on his outstanding briefing.

On behalf of the Côte d'Ivoire delegation, I wish a very warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Óscar Naranjo, Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, whose presence here today is an honour for us.

The report, which outlines recent developments in the peace process in Colombia, comes at a time when one the main players in that process, President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, is preparing to hand over power to his successor, Mr. Iván Duque. My delegation commends the various Colombian parties for having met the challenge of holding legislative and presidential elections in a peaceful climate with the participation of all. It also welcomes the resolve of the President-elect to strive to promote the unity of the country and to end the polarization of Colombian society.

My delegation also notes with satisfaction the significant progress made in the legislative sector and in several cross-cutting sectors. At the legislative level, my delegation welcomes the adoption by the Parliament of the rules of procedure on the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which has begun its work, as well as the authorization given for the holding of a referendum on measures to combat corruption.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the efforts made by the Colombian Government to implement the necessary legal guarantees for the reintegration of former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) combatants. It also welcomes the close cooperation of former FARC-EP leaders with the Truth Commission, which is charged with investigating human rights violations committed during the conflict. The appearance by the head of the People's Alternative Revolutionary Force (FARC), Mr. Rodrigo Londoño, before the Truth Commission on 29 June is an encouraging sign in this respect.

As regards cross-cutting sectors, my delegation is pleased with all efforts to involve young people and to integrate the gender dimension into the peace process, and it welcomes the measures aimed at ensuring the protection of children.

Despite the progress made, the peace process in Colombia remains a source of concern, not only because of the difficulties related to the implementation of the Peace Agreement signed on 24 November 2016 with the FARC-EP, but also the problems encountered in reviewing some crucial provisions of the Peace Agreement. The provisions in question — which relate to the justice procedure, a key component of transitional justice, land issues and the substitution programme — are key areas of the Agreement, whose

implementation is strongly recommended in order to foster trust between the various parties.

My delegation, furthermore, is concerned that some of the developments seen in recent months might undermine the achievements made in the peace process, for example, the arrest for illegal activities of the leader of FARC, Mr. Hernández Solarte, alias Jesus Santrich; attacks against former combatants and members of their families as well as human rights defenders; and uncertainties with respect to the future of the Agreement following the political handover.

Côte d'Ivoire urges the new Colombian leaders to pursue the implementation of the Peace Agreement with FARC and to undertake negotiations with the National Liberation Army in order to create conditions conducive to peace and sustainable development in the country. The new Government should also devise appropriate responses to economic, social, political and security concerns and to the issue of the rule of law in order to give the peace process in Colombia a real chance.

To that end, my delegation believes that in line with the conclusions contained in the report, the challenges that need to be dealt with include the reintegration of former combatants, security guarantees for communities, combating violence in former conflict areas, the proliferation of militias, appropriate measures in the area of the coca economy, and the frustrations and fears of former combatants and of communities that feel excluded from the peace process.

My delegation welcomes the implementation of a national political pact against violence and for the peaceful exercise of politics, now that the Pact of repudiation of violence against social leaders has been endorsed by State institutions, all major political expressions and civil society. Along those same lines, my delegation would encourage the new regime to ensure the protection of community leaders and human rights defenders in order to achieve true political, social and economic inclusion in Colombia. From this standpoint, my country would urge the international community to assist the peace efforts of the Colombian parties.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire expresses its full support for the peace process under way and for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and reiterates its readiness to work with the other members of the Security Council for the return and consolidation of peace in Colombia.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to echo our colleagues by first of all warmly welcoming the presence here of His Excellency the Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, Óscar Naranjo, and of the Permanent Representative of Colombia, María Emma Mejía Vélez. They have contributed to writing one of the most outstanding pages of the history of not only Colombia, but also our region. We also welcome the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, and we thank him for his briefing and for his tireless work on behalf of our Organization in Colombia. We also welcome the presence at this meeting of a number of colleagues from my region — ambassadors who are closely following the progress made on this issue in our work here in the Council.

Since the signing of the final Agreement, in 2016, the peace process in Colombia has yielded positive results that are unprecedented in any other peace process. These include a definitive ceasefire between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP); the laying down of weapons by FARC-EP; the setting up of a new political party, the People's Alternative Revolutionary Force (FARC), its participation in the 2018 electoral process and the assumption by its representatives of their new legislative posts; and a reduction in the level of violence in the country. According to the Victims Unit, prior to 2012 clashes had led to an estimated 3,000 deaths per year. Since the signing of the agreement in 2017, 78 fatalities have been recorded. Furthermore, it is worth underscoring the significant progress made in the area of humanitarian demining. To date, more than 264 municipalities have been declared mine-free, which represents 40 per cent of the total number of municipalities.

Every situation is different, but if we compare the process at hand with various issues that we deal with daily in the Council, we know from experience that merely consolidating a definitive ceasefire takes years to become a reality. That gives us an idea of how much basic progress has been made thanks to the leadership and the political will of President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón and the FARC. The Government has established institutions and developed an important legal framework aimed at implementing what is, by all accounts, an ambitious peace agreement. The agreement not only establishes an understanding between the

two parties to end the violence, but also offers an opportunity to address the fundamental problems in Colombia comprehensively, and seeks to eliminate the deep and historical differences between rural areas and cities, poverty, inequality and the absence of the State in areas affected by the conflict. That is why continuing the process is a priority.

It should be noted that during the recent holding of elections, as some of my colleagues have mentioned, there was wide voter participation among citizens in an environment marked by calm that had never been seen before. In our opinion, that demonstrates the benefits of the peace process, which benefit not only one sector, but the entirety of Colombian society and the region.

Bolivia would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Iván Duque on his election as President of the Republic of Colombia. We reiterate our sincerest wishes for his success and reaffirm the brotherly bonds that link our countries. We know that the challenges ahead are many, but I believe that I speak for everyone when I say that both the Latin America and Caribbean region and the rest of the international community, as a whole, are committed to working with Colombia, for which consolidating stable and lasting peace is an imperative. Clearly, the present situation presents a very complicated landscape. I will refer to the issues that my country believes to be of concern at this time.

First, concerning the murders of social leaders, former FARC members and human rights defenders, we are deeply concerned about and condemn such acts of violence. Despite efforts made, it is necessary to work even harder to extend the presence of public order beyond territorial reintegration areas, as well as to consolidate a State presence in areas formerly under FARC control. We urgently call for pursuing investigations to find those responsible and for the courts to punish them to the full extent of the law. We would be remiss if we did not mention and commend political leaders' unanimous support for the pact of repudiation of violence against social leaders, as it demonstrates unity in responding to such acts.

Secondly, there is a feeling of uncertainty and fear among former FARC combatants with respect to legal and political guarantees. Although it is a historical fact that eight members of the FARC political party have assumed their respective seats among the ten that were created for them in the Congress, the controversies resulting from the transitional justice system became more acute during the reporting period, partially owing to the detention of Jesús Santrich. Undoubtedly, that fact has created frustration among former FARC members. We therefore believe that is essential to respect the spirit of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace with regard to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

Thirdly, concerning the modest progress made in the area of economic reintegration, we welcome the issuance of a decree enabling access to landownership for former FARC members organized in cooperatives. Although that is an essential step forward, more than a year and a half have passed without that part of the agreement having been realized. It is necessary to ensure timely access to that benefit and move forward in the implementation process of the decree on cooperatives, as only 8 of 70 such projects are reportedly operating, according to the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/723).

Similarly, additional support is needed for productive projects and income-generating opportunities for former FARC combatants — a situation complicated by the fact that thousands of ex-members are scattered throughout the country. The importance of promoting and supporting a gender and ethnic perspective in realizing productive projects deserves to be mentioned. In that regard, the adoption of the strategy for the long-term reintegration of former combatants, covering an eight-year period until 2026, will provide the incoming Government with a plan ensuring a sustainable economic future for ex-combatants.

My delegation hopes for the successful outcome of discussions and negotiations currently under way between the Government of Colombia and the National Liberation Army. We are grateful for the contribution of the Republic of Cuba in this and other peace initiatives in our region.

Lastly, the challenges concerning this issue are many, but we can state that this peace process is the most important in the history of Colombia and requires the continued support of the international community not only to consolidate stable and lasting peace, but above all it must continue with the leadership and the political will that has been shown thus far.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I want to thank Special Representative Arnault for his briefing and welcome the participation of Vice-President Naranjo Trujillo. With regard to our Colombian friends, I want

to take a moment to reflect on the hard-won opportunity for a lasting peace that they have achieved, which seemed like an impossible dream at times, as President Santos Calderón has said. Through their tireless efforts to address justice and reparations issues in their peace agreement with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), Colombia is truly an example to the world. They should be proud of what they have done, and we look forward to what they will continue to achieve.

The Colombian Government is beginning to extend its presence and provide services in areas that have known conflict for decades. The United States applauds the Colombian Government's efforts to build roads, hospitals, police stations and schools in underserved rural and former conflict areas. Providing security, infrastructure and public services is critical to sustaining peace in Colombia. That has never been more important than it is now, especially during this time of transition and in the light of the recent killings of human rights defenders and community leaders. We commend the decision of President Santos Calderón and President-elect Duque, as well as key State institutions and political parties, to sign a national pact against the violence. Protecting the fundamental freedoms of all Colombian citizens, including social leaders, depends on strengthening the rule of law. Particularly important are successful prosecutions of those who seek to silence the voices of human rights advocates and community leaders.

The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia has been vital to this process, and we encourage Colombia to continue its important partnership with the Mission to support security as well as reintegration efforts for ex-combatants. We trust that the Government will continue the momentum established by the historic Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and consolidate security gains that will bring about a just and lasting peace for all Colombians. Ensuring meaningful justice and accountability for perpetrators of serious crimes committed during many years of armed conflict is vital to reconciliation, and we believe that the transitional justice processes outlined in the agreement provide the opportunity to deliver justice for victims.

At the same time, the successful implementation of the peace accord is inextricably linked to our joint efforts to dismantle criminal organizations and curtail narcotrafficking. In our own country, President Trump has made substance abuse prevention a priority, and we are devoting resources to reducing the demand for cocaine. In Colombia, the United States continues to work with authorities to cut coca cultivation and cocaine production by half by the end of 2023. Together we need to accelerate our counter-narcotics efforts and deliver sustainable results to the people of both countries through increased resources, the effective use of all available tools and an integrated whole-of-Government approach.

Colombians are not alone in the fight. The United States will continue to support them, including through a unique, comprehensive strategy to reduce coca cultivation, known as Antioquia libre de coca. Through coordinated efforts of the Colombian police and army, local and national Governments and the private sector, the plan is already delivering infrastructure and providing licit economic opportunities for local communities, while pushing coca growers to transition to licit crops. Importantly, owing in part to those efforts, the United States Government's 2017 coca cultivation estimates showed a 20 per cent decrease in the region being addressed for the first time in five years, thereby bucking a national trend. Colombia continues to establish the conditions for extended peace, and while challenges remain, the Government has shown its strength as a regional leader, especially by providing shelter and services to nearly 1 million Venezuelans fleeing crisis in their own country.

We are proud to have worked to support Colombia's response to the crisis, and we remain committed to continuing our engagement with Colombia to provide additional humanitarian support as needed. The people of Colombia know better than most that peace is precious but fragile. We stand with them in working to preserve that peace and build a strong and prosperous future for generations to come.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative Jean Arnault for his insightful and comprehensive briefing and for the important work that the United Nations Verification Mission is doing in support of the Peace Agreement in Colombia. He may be assured of our continued full support for his efforts. I would also like to welcome Vice-President Naranjo to the Security Council. We are grateful for his personal efforts and those of his Government to establish peace in Colombia. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is fully

committed to supporting peace in Colombia, which is also the message that my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Stephanus Blok, conveyed during his recent visit to the country. We follow developments in Colombia with particular interest. Our Kingdom is made up of four countries, of which Aruba and Curaçao are close maritime neighbours of Colombia.

The recently held presidential elections mark an important and commendable milestone in Colombia. The elections were fair, inclusive and peaceful, and saw the highest turnout in the country's recent history. We congratulate President-elect Iván Duque on winning the election and welcome his expressed commitment to seeking unity. The Prime Minister of Curaçao, Mr. Eugene Rhuggenaath, looks forward to attending the upcoming inauguration on behalf of our Kingdom. We also look forward to working closely with the new Government, based on the close friendship and interconnectedness between our two peoples.

The change of Governments in Colombia provides us with an occasion to take stock of what has been achieved so far and the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. The Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, which ended the 50-year conflict, is historic by any standard. We pay tribute to the Administration of President Santos Calderón and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) for their courage and leadership in advancing the peace process. We hope that Colombia will now seize the opportunity to further consolidate peace. In that context, I would like to touch on three points — our concern about the security situation, the need for the inclusive reintegration of former FARC members and the importance of transitional justice.

With respect to my first point, the security situation, we are deeply concerned about the high levels of insecurity in the zones most affected by the armed conflict. In these areas, social leaders, human rights defenders and journalists are increasingly being threatened and sometimes even killed. This often happens in areas where armed groups proliferate and continue to resist peacebuilding efforts. The Colombian people, State institutions and political parties alike have recently expressed themselves on this point in a so-called pact of repudiation of violence against social leaders, to which Mr. Arnault referred. The pact sends a strong signal that Colombians are not willing to accept the possibility that those who speak out are too often made to pay the highest price.

We are also concerned about the continued violence against former FARC combatants. Their security guarantees are central to the Peace Agreement and form the bedrock of a durable peace. The Government has taken initiatives to address the violence, strengthening mechanisms to prevent, protect and hold the perpetrators to account. But in order to make these mechanisms work, a thorough analysis of the patterns behind the violence, including identifying the intellectual authors, would be useful. We look forward to a comprehensive stabilization approach that effectively asserts the presence of the State in the most vulnerable regions and communities. It should include institutions for security, infrastructure, education, health care and the rule of law.

That brings me to my second point, concerning the inclusive reintegration of former combatants, which remains a core component of the Peace Agreement. The stimulation of income-generating activities and the provision of social services are important tools for addressing the root causes of the conflict and ultimately promoting self-reliance. We encourage the Government, the former FARC combatants, the private sector and the local authorities to jointly design a comprehensive strategy aimed at fully reintegrating the former combatants into society, as foreseen in the Peace Agreement. It is essential that women and youth have a voice in this process.

My third point concerns transitional justice, which is an essential aspect of conflict resolution. Accountability and reconciliation are two sides of the same coin on the road to sustainable peace. This is why my Government is actively supporting the transitional-justice institutions, as well as victims' organizations in Colombia, with a contribution of €2.5 million. We underscore the need for the swift, effective and properly resourced implementation of the different transitional-justice institutions. In this regard, we express our full support for the workings of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and welcome the fact that public hearings have started. In this way, transitional justice offers the opportunity to address past grievances, putting the 8 million victims of the armed conflict at the centre of our peacebuilding efforts. We hope this will turn the page in Colombia.

I will conclude in Spanish.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

The peace dividends I have just mentioned, especially security, inclusive reintegration and

transitional justice, are intimately connected. A sustained commitment to implementing the agreements in a comprehensive manner can ensure that peace in Colombia is stable and lasting. We call on all stakeholders to work together to this end and to continue to build on the great achievements that have been made. The international community is with Colombia, and Colombia can count on the continued support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would first like to welcome Vice-President Óscar Naranjo of Colombia to the Chamber today and to thank Special Representative Jean Arnault for his informative briefing.

The Security Council has met today to discuss the situation in Colombia a year after the adoption of resolution 2366 (2017) (see S/PV.7997), which heralded the completion of the process of the laying down of arms by former combatants and the country's embarking on a new, peaceful phase. The United Nations Verification Mission established by the resolution was mandated to monitor the Colombian Government's fulfilment of its part of the commitments under the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, which brought to an end hostilities that had lasted for decades.

We have seen a number of positive changes in the country this year. The former guerrilla movement has been transformed into a political party, parliamentary and presidential elections have been held with record turnouts and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace mechanism has been launched. Despite the problems of which we are all aware, these are all unquestionable signs of an improvement in the situation. It will be important to ensure that this progress continues, with the support of society. We sincerely wish Colombia's newly elected President Iván Duque and his Government every success on this path.

Mr. Arnault's briefing confirmed Colombians' resolve to work to advance the peace process, although there is still a great deal to be done. Long-standing disagreements are still hampering the consolidation of sustainable peace, which is why we wholeheartedly support the assistance provided to the Colombians by the United Nations presence under Mr. Arnault's leadership. We are grateful to the Verification Mission for monitoring the situation in the country. We are seriously concerned about the disturbing reports of the ongoing murders of former combatants and community leaders, seizures of liberated lands and problems with the political and socioeconomic reintegration of former combatants and the transitional justice system. All of these require urgent solutions for which a responsible approach on the part of the country's leadership is clearly essential, along with support from all sectors of society and an overall commitment to the peace that was so hard-won. The continued attention of the international community — which sees Colombia as a good example of post-conflict recovery — is also important, not to mention a particular focus on developments with regard to the National Liberation Army.

We will continue to emphasize that the Colombians' demonstration of responsibility as a nation and their desire to seek politically sustainable solutions made possible the signing of the 2016 Peace Agreement, which enabled the Security Council and the Secretary-General to support the peace process and must therefore be upheld exactly as it is by all parties. For our part, we once again affirm our willingness to continue to support the people and the Government of Colombia in their work of building a lasting peace and post-conflict development.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank Special Representative Arnault for his briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2018/723). We are pleased that the Vice-President of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Óscar Naranjo, is here with us today.

The first and second rounds of the presidential elections, held on 27 May and 17 June, as well as the congressional election held in March, sent a positive message for all who closely follow the implementation of Colombia's Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, not only because they were conducted in an entirely peaceful and inclusive manner but because they have symbolic significance in opening a new chapter in the country's political history following the end of five decades of conflict. We congratulate both the Government of Colombia and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) for their commitment and such major achievements. We also congratulate the outgoing President, Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, on the courage and commitment he has shown in steering the peace process.

While Colombians have continued to show patience and perseverance in the face of the challenges presented by the implementation process, they still face serious problems in making the terms of the Peace Agreement a reality, and the Council should continue to provide all of the necessary support to the Colombian parties in their efforts to handle those challenges and speedily implement the full Agreement.

As the Secretary-General's report noted, we are very much encouraged by the intention expressed by President-elect Iván Duque to turn the page on polarization and build a consensus on the envisaged goals of the Peace Agreement. While we are encouraged by his intention to keep the fundamental parts of the Agreement, we would also like to underscore the fact that great caution will be needed when making any improvements to it in order to avoid unintended consequences that could affect the implementation process. We recognize the Constitutional Court's major achievements in reviewing peace-related legislation, including the legislative acts that created congressional seats for the FARC, a land fund and other measures for improving access to land and modifying the National Protection Unit to include former combatants in the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) as close protection officers. Such measures can strengthen hope and faith in implementing the Peace Agreement.

We are also conscious of the sensitive issues that still require careful handling. The increasing violence in the conflict zones, the delays in the socioeconomic reintegration of FARC-EP combatants into civilian life, the issue of access to land ownership, the absence or inadequate presence of State institutions in places left by FARC-EP combatants, the continued killings of community leaders, former FARC members and their relatives, as well as other issues highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General, could potentially complicate the tasks ahead in consolidating peace in the country. In that regard, the national pact against violence and killings signed by the outgoing and incoming Presidents, key State institutions and political parties will be instrumental in dealing with the increasing patterns of violence, especially in the rural parts of Colombia.

With regard to the negotiation between the Colombian Government and the National Liberation Army, we are encouraged by the report that the two parties have continued their sixth round of negotiations in order to achieve an improved ceasefire agreement. We urge the parties to engage constructively in good-faith discussions towards reaching a new ceasefire agreement, as well as a permanent peace agreement.

We commend Special Representative Arnault and the United Nations personnel in Colombia for all their efforts in support of the Peace Agreement. We also reiterate our appreciation to the countries of the region and other international partners that continue to closely support and accompany the implementation of the Peace Agreement. Lastly, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our continued support to the full implementation of the Colombian Peace Agreement and to stand in solidarity with the people and the Government of Colombia as they open a new chapter and march towards sustainable peace.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): I would like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Óscar Naranjo, Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, to today's Council meeting. Let me also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for a very informative briefing.

The presidential and legislative elections that took place in May this year were Colombia's most peaceful and inclusive in more than 50 years. We congratulate President-elect Mr. Iván Duque and hope for productive, sincere and open cooperation between the new Administration and the Council.

As the peace process remains an undeniable success of Colombian society, we would also like to acknowledge the unquestionable role of President Santos Calderón and the leaders of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC), who made it possible and turned an agreement from a piece of paper into reality on the ground. It serves as a source of inspiration worldwide and sends a message that peace is possible, even if it seemed unimaginable just a few years ago. Intense political will is still required on both sides to drive the peace process forward. We strongly believe that the parties will remain united. We hope that despite the difficulties in the implementation of the peace process, the general timetable for its completion will be maintained. We take note of the recently launched sixth cycle of talks with the National Liberation Army in Havana and hope that it will bring tangible results.

The acceptance by Congress of the rules of procedure of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and its

first public hearings, along with the inauguration of the new Congress with 10 representatives from the FARC political party, sends a positive message.

The question of security remains an issue. We are concerned about the continued insecurity in some of the conflict-affected areas, including the increase in the killings of human rights defenders and social and community leaders. It fuels social mistrust of the Government's willingness to fulfil its commitments. The Government's Plan Horus, which has been implemented in the most vulnerable municipalities, has yet to produce the desired effect. Suffice it to say that an additional 22 FARC members were killed during the reporting period. Also, despite considerable efforts on the part of the Government, coca cultivation is growing. There is a close connection between drug trafficking and the widespread insecurity in some regions near the strategic drug-trafficking routes. We strongly believe that the national pact rejecting violence signed on 9 July by outgoing President Santos and President-elect Duque, as well as key State institutions and political parties, is a major step towards ensuring that social leaders will not fear for their lives.

The full political, legal and socioeconomic reintegration of the former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) is essential. We strongly believe that the adoption of the landmark decree enabling access to land ownership for former combatants will offer the strongest possible incentive for the majority of former FARC-EP members, greatly assisting them in the uneasy process of reintegration. We hope that it will be implemented as quickly as possible now that the election period has ended. The efforts that the National Reintegration Council has made to ensure a more gender-sensitive approach to economic reintegration are visible and have been well received. Once again we underline that a durable peace can be achieved only when women and men are equally involved in the peace process.

In conclusion, Poland fully supports the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which continues to play a vital role in facilitating the implementation of the Peace Agreement. We also commend the role of the country team and every United Nations agency present on the ground. While the peace process is making significant progress, further strong involvement on the part of the United Nations in Colombia remains crucially important.

Mr. Michon (France) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Óscar Naranjo Trujillo, Vice-President of Colombia, and pay tribute to him for his personal commitment to peace and the role he played in the negotiation and implementation of the Peace Agreement with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP).

(*spoke in French*)

I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, both for the quality of his briefing and for his exemplary work as Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

The Colombian authorities, particularly President Santos Calderón, have shown exceptional political courage that has been a source of admiration and inspiration for the entire international community. Despite doubts and criticism, they initiated a historic peace process with the FARC-EP and have redoubled their efforts to implement it. Mr Jean-Yves Le Drian, our Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, is currently visiting Colombia and will take the opportunity to reaffirm France's unwavering support for this process and our readiness to continue to support the Colombian people on the road to peace. That is the message that he will convey to the President-elect, Mr. Iván Duque, whom he will have the honour of meeting during his visit.

The United Nations in general, and the Security Council in particular, have also played a key role in implementing the Peace Agreement by providing the necessary support for disarmament and the political transition of the FARC-EP. With regard to the mandate conferred on the second United Nations Mission in Colombia, I would like to focus on three points today.

First, France reiterates its congratulations to the Colombian authorities on their organization and successful holding of presidential elections on 27 May and 17 June. That democratic exercise, which followed the parliamentary elections held in March, confirmed the evolution of Colombian political life towards a more peaceful climate and Colombian citizens' broader participation in the democratic process. In that regard, we encourage the elected authorities to pursue the implementation of every aspect of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace concluded with the FARC-EP. Particular

attention should be paid to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which is the cornerstone of the comprehensive truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition system, as well as to amnesty for detainees and the search for the tens of thousands of persons assumed to be missing. Those commitments by the Colombian State are commitments to peace undertaken before the international community and it is important that they be fully honoured.

My second point concerns the security of the women and men working for peace in the areas affected by the conflict. France firmly condemns the killings of civil-society leaders, human rights defenders and those involved in coca substitution programmes. Despite the Colombian authorities' commitment to reducing the level of violence, the situation remains extremely worrying. In a context where illegal armed groups are struggling to regain control of areas previously controlled by the FARC-EP, it is taking a long time for peace dividends to reach the local populations. We therefore encourage continued efforts, including the deployment of State services, both security forces and civilian institutions, in those areas. Furthermore, combating impunity for crimes committed in the context of the conflict, including extrajudicial executions, is crucial and must continue.

Finally, I would like to draw the Council's attention once again to another key point for reintegration and the future of the peace process, which is access to land and sources of income. Indeed, once the issue of access to land is resolved and the restitution of the lands looted during the conflict is the subject of legal proceedings, it is socioeconomic projects that will give former combatants prospects for a future within the Colombian national community. That socioeconomic reintegration, which is closely linked to the provision of State services in the most vulnerable areas, is the key to the lasting success of the peace process. It is receiving major support from the international community, including France and the European Union, through various financial instruments. The restoration of territories that have been ruined by half a century of conflict depends on it.

Regardless of their political affiliation, all Colombians can be proud of the Peace Agreement reached with the FARC-EP. More than ever, consolidating that peace requires the unity of the Colombian nation as it enters a new era, one in which former combatants will take their full place in Colombian society and other groups, we hope, will choose to turn away from violence, as we expect the National Liberation Army to do. France therefore encourages the new Colombian authorities to continue implementing the agreement and confirm the remarkable success of the peace process in Colombia.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): At the outset, I would like to welcome His Excellency the Vice President of Colombia, Mr. Óscar Naranjo Trujillo, to the Security Council. I would also like to thank Special Representative Arnault for his briefing and the active role of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

Kazakhstan welcomes all the positive developments in Colombia and commends the significant efforts that have been made to ensure the irreversibility of the peace process. In view of the recent presidential and congressional elections, the first held in Colombia since its achievement of a historic peace deal in 2016, we hope its new Administration will respect and guarantee the full implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, treasuring and building on the gains achieved to the benefit of all Colombians. And with the swearing in of the new Congress on 20 July, we hope to see faster implementation of the peace-related legislation, especially as it pertains to important rural and political reforms.

It is gratifying to know that Colombia is the first country to have created a transitional justice system. We are confident that the Colombian legislative body and political forces will remain dedicated to justice. It is also essential that they commit to peace and ensure the smooth functioning of the comprehensive system for truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition proposed in the peace accord. Kazakhstan welcomes the holding of the first public hearings within the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and looks forward to the effective operation of the other justice-system institutions, the Truth Commission and the Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing.

At the same time, we are deeply concerned about the ongoing deadly violence against social leaders, community activists and human rights defenders. Kazakhstan welcomes the eight new measures announced by President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, to be taken in addition to the previous launch of a rapid response system and the reorganization of the

army. We hope that those measures, along with the recently adopted pact of repudiation of violence against social leaders, will guarantee the collective security of all the threatened groups and curb their killings. Kazakhstan is also dismayed by the current vulnerable security state of former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo and their family members, which could very likely jeopardize their reincorporation into society. We believe, however, that the Colombian Government and all the parties concerned will make every effort to avoid an escalation of violence and do their best to guarantee the peace process's smooth continuation and success.

We welcome the continuation of the peace talks between the Colombian Government and the last remaining guerrilla group, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). However, Kazakhstan notes with regret that the hostile activity of militia groups in the Colombian-Ecuadorian border region has resulted in the killing of innocent people. We hope that during the sixth cycle of inclusive consultations, which started on 2 July, the Colombian Government and the ELN will be able to achieve a new bilateral ceasefire. We also urge Colombia's incoming administration to continue negotiations to that end.

Lastly, Kazakhstan reiterates its firm commitment to the Colombian peace process and calls upon all interested parties to do their best to foster reconciliation.

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to express our appreciation for the briefing just delivered by Mr. Jean Arnault, which not only provides a clear, detailed and concise picture of the current situation in Colombia, but also shows the ongoing effort that the United Nations team is making to support the peace process in the country. We also welcome the presence of His Excellency Oscar Adolfo Naranjo Trujillo, Vice-President of Colombia.

The successful conclusion of the recent presidential elections held at the end of May and beginning of June is a another step forward in the political process in Colombia, which has been under way since the triumphant legislative elections of 11 March. It demonstrates the goodwill of the Colombian people and the progress made, with the support of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and thus demonstrates the positive changes in its national policy.

However, we note with great concern the confrontations that continue to take place in the country despite the signed pact, which is recognized by all parties, institutions, political parties and the President. We are concerned that all the progress achieved is being reversed. We therefore urge all parties to the Colombian political process, despite the change of Government, to work together to ensure the implementation of the Peace Agreement, which enjoys the unanimous support of the members of the Security Council and concerning which the representatives of the country's main political parties stressed the need to ensure irreversibility.

To guarantee the development of the Colombian political process, the new Government must facilitate the improvement of the gains already made with regard to the reintegration and security of the former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). It must allow that process to continue, establishing strategies and taking necessary measures to reintegrate the members of that group into society and to provide the necessary protection and security in the areas formerly occupied by FARC, protecting also thousands of children and women who were displaced by the fighting and guaranteeing their rights as members of civil society.

The Colombian Government is called upon to take action in the interest and to the benefit of the people of Colombia, who for so long have been victims of the many differences that sadly persist to this day, though on a smaller scale. We encourage the Government to continue engaging in the negotiations being carried out in Cuba with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional.

We note that in the case of any problem, the root causes of the conflict must be tackled first, because therein lies the foundation for the lasting peace that is sought in this case. In that regard, we would like to recall the words of the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, His Excellency Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, during the sixth national dialogue round table, held from 16 to 23 of this month, between the Government and the political parties of our country, when he said,

> "The chief guarantor of national unity, the balance of State institutions by virtue of the attributes conferred to them by law, is the Government, which must ensure that the needs of the people are met in order to defuse possible divisions and overcome the challenges the country faces."

Finally, my delegation would like to express its appreciation for all the hard work that the Security Council is doing in Colombia under the protection of the resolutions adopted in this Chamber and with respect for the Charter of the United Nations to put an end to the situation that has affected the Colombian people for several decades.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome again to the Security Council Mr. Óscar Naranjo Trujillo, Vice-President of Colombia. I also thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for his valuable briefing and his comprehensive presentation on the most important achievements in Columbia, as well as the challenges that are still facing the peace operation there.

We reaffirm our full support for the peace process in Colombia during the upcoming round of negotiations between the Colombian Government and the National Liberation Army. We hope that the negotiations will be successful in ensuring that the aspirations of the Colombian people — establishing a secure and safe environment characterized by tolerance and integration, while leading to progress and economic development in Colombia — are met.

We commend the holding recently of successful presidential elections and the high voter turnout by Colombians in a safe environment that demonstrated the sincere resolve of all Colombian parties to achieve stability and lasting peace in their country. In that regard, we congratulate the new President-elect, Mr. Iván Duque, and express our hope that the new Colombian Government will continue to work pursuant to the Peace Agreement and implement all its items to ensure the desired stability and peace.

We commend the efforts of President Santos and the leaders of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC). The opening session of the Parliament included FARC representatives, and that is the best demonstration of the progress achieved. We also commend the efforts of the current Colombian Government to improve the security situation and to advance in the areas of legislation, transitional justice and the reintegration of former FARC combatants.

In that regard, we underscore the importance of continuing to provide security, legal, social and economic guarantees in order to reintegrate former FARC members. There is also a need to protect the leaders of local communities and human rights defenders, in addition to religious leaders. We call for promoting attention to women and young people so as to guarantee their participation in the various initiatives linked to national reforms and policies. They must be an integral part of the solution and custodians of the future. Furthermore, we look forward to the holding of a referendum on 26 August by the Colombian Government on the management of public resources in the context of combating corruption with full transparency.

The State of Kuwait commends the ongoing efforts of the United Nations Verification Mission, led by Mr. Arnault, in coordination with national, regional and local authorities, along with the civil society and the private sector. Its role is to support national initiatives and achieve stability and peace in Colombia. We reaffirm our commitment to the Government of Colombia and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in their efforts in achieving what the Colombian people want — peace, security and prosperity for their country.

The President: I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Sweden.

I want to first thank Mr. Jean Arnault for his excellent work and his briefing today. I want to reiterate Sweden's full support of his efforts and those of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

I also welcome Vice-President Naranjo to the Chamber today. We thank him for his very important personal contribution to peace in Colombia. Through him I also want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to President Juan Manuel Santos for his leadership, as well as that of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) for their determination to turn a new page and to deliver peace for the benefit of all Colombians. Indeed, FARC's transition from guerilla movement to political party is historic and irreversible. We also congratulate the people of Colombia on the recent elections and incoming President Duque, as he assumes his office soon. The Colombian Peace Agreement demonstrates that conflicts can be solved with dialogue rather than guns. It is an inspirational example.

Ensuring that the full benefits of the peace process are secured will require continued investment in its implementation. We welcome that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, a key component of the Peace

Agreement, has started its crucial work. It was designed and agreed with the objective of guaranteeing truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition, and the fulfilment of this commitment should help heal the divisions created by decades of conflict.

The continuing violence against, and the increasing number of killings of, human rights defenders, community leaders, FARC members and their families, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/723), is of grave concern. It underscores the need for the State to fill the power vacuum, to do its utmost to ensure respect for human rights and accountability for violations and abuses thereof, and to safeguard that the rule of law benefits all Colombians in all of Colombia.

In that connection, we welcome the national pact signed by both President Santos and President-elect Duque and by key State institutions and political parties. We encourage the Government of Colombia to pair its efforts to provide security in conflict-affected areas with a stronger presence of civilian authorities and agencies providing basic services to communities.

The Peace Agreement has provided a historic opportunity to bring socioeconomic development and the rule of law to all parts of the country. To seize that opportunity, a redoubled and sustained effort is now needed from all parts of the State in support of the wider Peace Agreement, including comprehensive rural reform, so that it can rapidly deliver tangible peace dividends for all Colombians.

The full political, legal and socioeconomic reintegration of former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo members is of the utmost importance. That includes progress on the setting up of productive projects and the key issue of access to land for reintegration.

We would like to highlight the important recommendation in the report on the importance of combating the drug trade as an integral part of the effort to advance peace, development and the rule of law in former conflict areas. We also want to stress the importance of encouraging the voluntary illicit-crop substitution programme, which can provide people with a lawful and predictable income opportunity.

The Peace Agreement in Colombia is a model for inclusion. To succeed in consolidating the peace, the implementation of the peace process must continue to be inclusive. In that regard, I want to highlight the important work the Mission has undertaken on gender mainstreaming, as well as its engagement with women's groups and youth groups in Colombia.

Finally, we welcome the ongoing talks between the Government and the Ejército Nacional de Liberación and reiterate that the United Nations and the Security Council should stand ready to assist the parties in a meaningful way. As a member of the Grupo de Países de Apoyo, we will assist the process as much as we can.

Over the last two years, the Council has travelled the path of peace with the Government and the people of Colombia. We look forward to continuing our constructive engagement with the incoming Government, given the Council's commitment to support implementation of the peace agreement.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Vice-President of Colombia.

Mr. Naranjo Trujillo (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Twenty months after signing the Agreement that put an end to the conflict with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and 12 days from the end of the term of the President of the Republic, Juan Manuel Santos, I bring to the Security Council, to the United Nations and to the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia an expression of gratitude from my Government and 50 million Colombians. We are grateful for what has been indisputable support for peacebuilding in my country.

On this opportunity, as it is our final intervention, having received the third consecutive report of the Mission, I wish to issue a call in the Council to the entire world and to our compatriots for the protection and safeguarding of peace — the supreme, superlative good of a society.

Safeguarding peace in Colombia means, in principle, recognizing that the leadership efforts of President Juan Manual Santos to reach it were not based on any political calculation, but rather on the ethical conviction that it was urgent to put an end to 53 years of violence that, regrettably, cut short the lives of 220,000 Colombians. Putting an end to the conflict with that conviction meant acknowledging that five decades of internal clashes resulted in more than 8,400,000 victims in our country.

Safeguarding peace means honouring our commitments under the Agreement, with the understanding that the promise is not that of one Administration, but rather that of the State in its entirety and of society in general.

Safeguarding and protecting peace means not ignoring the great achivements — which representatives have mentioned here — that have been made in record time. After 53 years of armed conflict, there was a surrender of arms in nine months — in record time, before the year and a half timeline. FARC, an organization that had taken up arms and defied the Colombian State and society, transformed into a political party, in record time. That political party now has a seat in Colombia's Congress, as we saw on 20 July.

Safeguarding peace means that the reintegration of 13,000 ex-combatants of FARC represents opportunities for rights, services and personal safety. As has been mentioned here, it provides political security, but also the security of being linked socioeconomically to a legal system.

Mr. Jean Arnault, Head of the Mission, has said clearly that reintegration is critical. On that issue, I wish to assure the Council that today, more than 12,000 ex-combatants are receiving a basic monthly stipend equivalent to 90 per cent of minimum wage in my country. I want to assure the Council that 9,000 are linked to our security and pension systems. I assure the Council that we are making progress, certainly not as quickly as we would like, so as to make productive projects a reality, but I do want to share a piece of good news that has also been mentioned during the meeting. The Government of President Santos is bequeathing the next Government a mid-to-long-term public policy document. That means that there is a clear road map that will make reintegration sustainable.

Safeguarding and protecting peace means increasing efforts in order to continue to reduce violence.

We will never tire of saying that in 2017, as a result of the Agreement, Colombia saw the lowest murder rate in the last 42 years. Sadly, we are facing a major contradiction in this regard. Although the murder rate is decreasing, the number of threats and attacks against social leaders and human rights defenders has risen.

I would like to underscore, as the members of the Council have done, the remarkable fact that under the leadership of President Santos, the whole nation has been brought together under a comprehensive political pact, with no distinctions from the local to the central level. We hope that this political pact against violence will be a very powerful tool, conveying the imperative need to renounce the old culture of conflict in which death seemed to be part of the solution. Now we are trying to ensure that life is protected as a supreme, exceptional and sacred social good. The logic of death for life is the real challenge that we are facing in the wake of 50 years of war.

Safeguarding peace means recognizing and strengthening the legitimacy of our Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. We wish to say today, without any excessive optimism, that we feel great satisfaction at the fact that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, through its hearings, has prioritized dealing with three tragedies of war: the tragedy of the abductions that took place during the 53 years of conflict; the tragedy of the recruitment of minors — children, girls, boys and teenagers — in that war; and what is known in my country as false-positive cases: the deaths of innocent citizens within the context of the conflict.

These hearings are part and parcel of a functioning transitional justice system whose goal is to bring to justice and punish those who were in any way involved in that internal armed conflict and who broke laws and violated human rights. It gives us assurance that we are moving forward, as we have said so often in the past, in a manner that strikes a balance between peace and justice, as is necessary in order to move towards reconciliation.

Safeguarding peace means continuing to ensure that our institutions, whose approach is based on more than just counter-insurgency, are effective throughout our territory — a territory that is now perceived not as a theatre for military operations but as a land where conditions are being created for the transformation of communities. We are well aware of the fact that we must continue to progress in our understanding in order to change that logic and reach all of those territories, no longer as police or the military, but as a unified State that protects its communities. Safeguarding and protecting peace means recognizing the invaluable support of the international community, for which we should like once again to express our gratitude.

If there is one unifying factor around peace in Colombia, it is the unfailing support of the Council. We

say to our compatriots and to the entire world that we have no words to express our gratitude for the unanimous way in which the Council has supported peacebuilding efforts in our country. Thanks to the work of the Council and to observations and recommendations of the Mission, we understand that challenges remain.

We know that as we travel the road ahead, we will have to give priority to, first, safeguarding life in those areas where leaders have begun to speak out in favour of democratic participation in the country. Secondly, we must also need to move forward in overcoming Colombia's historical tragedy: drug trafficking. In that regard, we would stress that given the end of armed conflict with FARC, for the first time in the 35 years of that tragedy we have now a unique opportunity. Instead of a strategy to combat illegal crop cultivation and the production of drugs, we can set up, as we are doing, a crop-substitution programme so that the 124,000 families that have expressed their desire to abandon this illicit activity can earn their living legally.

We must also strengthen our efforts to combat organized crime, because we are not naïve. Colombia is now facing pressure from international cross-border drug-trafficking organizations that wish to continue with their illegal trade. The Council can be sure that the Government of President Santos will, until the very last minute of its mandate, be strengthening the country's capacity to contain this threat.

Safeguarding peace must also mean — and we say this without any pretension — that the lessons learnt from the Colombian process of seeking an end to the conflict can serve as a lesson to other nations so that they, too, can overcome violence and differences and so that conflicts become a thing of the past. Perhaps we are a little sentimental in a world that is suffering from so many conflicts, but we feel that perhaps the case of Colombia is a paradigmatic one.

We are aware that genuine, innovative efforts were made here that were based on ethical standards, political pragmatism and international support, and we therefore, at the end of our term, express our gratitude in that respect. The Council can rest assured: the incoming Government of President-elect Iván Duque has said that it will continue to give priority to the agreements reached and ensure that Colombia continues down a path towards sustainable peacebuilding.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before we adjourn this meeting, I should just like to say — and I am sure that I am speaking on behalf of all the members of the Council — that we thank the Vice-President for his pivotal, key, decisive and personal role in all the progress made in the peace process in Colombia. We thank him very much.

(*spoke in English*)

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.